Stability Operations: Defeating the Twenty-First Century Threat

EWS Contemporary Issues Paper

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To

Major J.K. Kelley, CG 1

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The post 9/11 world order is challenging the United States military to readjust its force structure, core missions, and doctrine. As an extension of changing foreign policy, the military is increasingly finding itself outside of its Cold-War comfort zone and into more non-traditional roles. Tasks like stabilization, prevention, and reconstruction are common in the post 9/11 environment. As a result of evolving threats, stability operations should be considered a core mission of U.S. military units.

Evolving the Threat

The Commandant's 2006 Planning Guidance clearly outlines that the Nation is engaged in the Long War.[1]   The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review[2] (QDR) describes the new enemy as dispersed, global terrorist networks that exploit Islam to advance radical political aims.[3] These small, sophisticated, organized terrorist cells operating globally and/or within our borders consistently demonstrate the ability to counter U.S.

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[1] Long War – General John Abizaid, CENTCOM commander, coined the term in his reference to the struggle against al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremist. The Bush Administration has adopted the term as its official language to refer to actions taken by U.S. personnel against various governments and terrorist organizations believed to be supporting terrorist activities against the United States and its allies. Wikipedia, *Long War (21st Century)*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_War_(21st Century), (2 Feb 2008)

[2] 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review – "Known as the QDR, the Pentagon releases this document every four years to coincide with the presidential electoral cycle as required by Congress. Each QDR represents a snapshot in time of the department's strategy for defense of the nation and the capabilities needed to effectively execute that defense. The QDR focuses on capabilities, resources, budgets, programs, roles, and functions". *QDR 2006*

[3] Department of Defense, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)*: 2006 (Washington, D.C.) p. 1.

conventional military power by exploiting non-traditional lines

of operations. They manipulate media agencies, exploit

underdeveloped communities, and neutralize local and national

governments in an effort to build a sustainable, effective, and

dedicated force structure intent on destroying societies across

the free world.

   These terrorist cells have evolved as a counter to

U.S./Allied conventional superiority. Their tactics and

procedures have forced U.S. strategy and policy to adjust from a

position of overwhelming response to one of prevention and

deterrence.

   The analysis of threats to American interests cannot be

confined to the irregular[4] enemies of the Long War. Traditional[5]

challenges such as North Korea, Iran, and Syria are viable

regional threats of significant concern. However, "allied

superiority in traditional domains, coupled with the costs of

traditional military competition, drastically reduce

adversaries' incentives to compete with the U.S. in this arena."[6]

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[4] Irregular threats are challenges from state and non-state actors employing
methods such as terrorism and insurgency to counter our traditional military
advantages, or engaging in criminal activity such as piracy and drug
trafficking that threaten regional security. George W. Bush *The National
Security Strategy of the United States of America*,(NSS) (Washington, D.C: The
White House, March 2006) p.44
[5] Traditional challenges posed by states employing armies, navies, and air
forces in well-established forms of military competition. (NSS p. 44)
[6] Rumsfeld, Donald. *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*:
Department of Defense, March 2005, (Pentagon, Washington, D.C.) Sect. I, p.1

The United States' conventional advantage has forced an evolution of enemy tactics and procedures. It is only prudent that military personnel adjust military capabilities to combat this new enemy.

Defining Stability Operations

Over the last 15 years, the definition of operations aimed at deterring war has evolved. According to Nina M. Serafino's brief to Congress "the term 'peacekeeping' gained currency in the late 1950's when the United Nations provided an "inter-positional" force to supervise the keeping of a cease fire or peace accord…."[7] The U.S. military engaged heavily in "peacekeeping" missions in the 1990's as part of U.N. or NATO coalitions in Bosnia (1992-2004), Haiti (1994-1996 and again in 2004), and Somalia (1992-1994). The experience of the 90's arguably left a bad taste for "peacekeeping" missions within the U.S. military and fueled the argument that such operations did not clearly define expectations and objectives of military forces, degraded the ability of the armed forces to conduct its primary mission, and were not a cost-effective use of military assets.

Current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought the debate of the military's role in non-traditional missions back

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[7] Nina M. Serafino, "Peacekeeping and Related Stability Operations: Issues for U.S. Military Involvement," *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, updated March 27, 2006: p. 3

into the spotlight. The complex nature of these operations has

triggered another attempt to frame an acceptable definition to

describe what exactly military forces are doing: In November

2005, the DoD issued Directive 3000.05 which states "stability

operations are a core U.S. military mission that the DoD shall

be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given

priority comparable to combat operations…"[8]

The Directive goes on to define stability operations "as

those military and civilian activities conducted across the

spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order

in State and regions."[9] Directive 3000.05 specifically tasks the

military services to be capable of:

> Rebuilding indigenous institutions – to include: security
> forces, correctional facilities, and judicial systems.
>
> Revive or rebuild the private sector
>
> Develop representative governmental institutions
> Integrate civilian and military efforts[10]

The Directive is a monumental shift in DoD priorities and

should be viewed as an indicator of changing policies and

concept of employment to meet the challenges of the post 9/11

world.

Defining Military Capabilities

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[8] U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *DoD Directive 3000.05*, 2005. (Washington D.C.), p. 2
[9] DoD Directive 3000.05, p. 2
[10] DoD Directive 3000.05, p. 2

In his 2001 article, "A military for the 21st Century"

General Anthony Zinni addresses two questions regarding military

capabilities:

1. In regard to the growing number of nontraditional
   threats, Zinni asks: "Will these continue to increase,
   with new types added to the confusing mix, and will we
   rely on the military as our principle instrument to deal
   with them?"[11]

2. Can we afford the kind of military that can meet all the
   potential challenges ahead, which could span the spectrum
   from dealing with an emerging global power, to
   confronting strong regional powers with significant
   capabilities such as weapons of mass destruction, to
   responding to the growing list of transnational threats?[12]

The last five years are proving the first question to be

true. Non-traditional threats are dominating the battlefields

and are a significant threat to American interests, both at home

and abroad. The National Security Strategy reinforces the non-

traditional threat assessment:

America is now threatened less by conquering states than we
are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and
armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of
the embittered few.[13]

The expectations and performance of military forces in Iraq

and Afghanistan have set precedents that are likely to become

the standard. Directive 3000.05 addresses this issue when

stating, "many stability operations tasks are best performed by

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[11] Anthony C. Zinni. "A Military for the 21st Century: Lessons from the Recent
Past." Strategic Forum no. 181 (July 2001): 4.
[12] Zinni,4.
[13] National Security Strategy,

indigenous, foreign, or U.S. civilian professionals.
Nonetheless, U.S. military forces shall be prepared to perform
all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when
civilians cannot do so".[14]

This is not an unrealistic expectation when one realizes
that the ability to deploy personnel for extended periods of
time to hostile and austere conditions and who are capable of
self-sustainment largely resides within the DoD. The military's
unique capabilities tend to put it at the forefront of being the
initial executor of stability operations. It is important to
note that within the Department of State and other U.S. Agencies
significant reform is being made to address this very issue.
The development and execution of Department of State run
provincial reconstruction teams[15] are proving to be critical to
the success of Reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.
What remains to be determined is their ability to operate
without the security and logistical support of the U.S.
military.

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[14] DoD Directive 3000.05, p. 2
[15] Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are small operational units
comprised of diplomats, military officers, development policy experts (from
USAID, the Dept of Agriculture, and the Dept of Justice), and other
specialists (in fields such as rule of law, engineering, and oil industry
operations) who work closely with provincial leaders and the communities they
serve. There purpose is to strengthen relationships with local, business and
community leaders, and elected officials who are committed to building a
prosperous, peaceful, and democratic society. Department of State, Bureau of
Public Affairs, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Building Iraqi Capacity and
Accelerating the Transition of Iraqi Self-Reliance*, January 11, 2007,
www.state.gov, accessed 19 December 2007

Another debate posed by Serafino which also aligns with Zinni's second question is "whether the U.S. military should do 'nation-building', and if does how should it prepare for it".[16] The term "nation-building" brings negative connotations, but from a military perspective the associated missions remain the same. Projects might include building infrastructure, schools, reestablishing public services and governmental institutions, and providing medical services to the local populace.

So if the term is "nation building" or stability operations the issue lies within the U.S. military's ability to develop, train, and sustain the organic capability to accomplish stability related tasks.

To meet those requirements, the DoD is increasing the size of the military services, specifically the Army and Marine Corps. Increases in key MOSs such as civil affairs, military police, linguists, and psychological operations are indicators that the DoD is looking to build and sustain capabilities suitable for stability operations.

As the military increases size to address personnel and capability shortfalls, the issue then turns to retaining the ability to accomplish its core mission of combat operations. What is the right number of personnel, with the right equipment,

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[16] Serafino, p. 6

the right training, and a sustainable operational tempo to defeat any adversary across the spectrum of conflict? This would be impossible to forecast, but if frequency of a particular missions is an indicator – stability operations must be treated as equal to combat operations.

Analysis

Current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought the debate of combat operations versus stability operations to center stage.

Traditionalist will argue the need to preserve military power for the critical time and place. They will also argue that non-combat deployments degrade readiness by straining equipment, delaying routine maintenance, and causing an undue strain on operational forces. Sarafino succinctly captures the readiness issue in her report on opposition to peacekeeping operations in the 1990s:

> (1) Military personnel could not practice all their combat skills while engaged in peacekeeping operations;
>
> (2) In the 1990's, the U.S. military performed these operations at the same time the armed forces, particularly the Army, were reduced substantially;
>
> (3) Funds for training and equipment were diverted in the past to fund peacekeeping operations.[17]

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[17] Sarafino p.11

As stated earlier, the size of the military service directly relates to its ability to carry out its assigned tasks. Service end-strength has taken on considerable attention within the DoD over the last year and rightfully so. At an annual cost of $100,000 per troop[18], additional troop strength is severely scrutinized. However, this is directly related to expected missions assigned by policy makers. If the military is expected to have a two- theatre capability, sustain stability operations, and recruit, train, and equip its force then troop strength and training programs need to reflect.

Conclusion

The Twenty-first Century has brought with it a changing and dynamic world full of opportunity. The United States has emerged from the Cold War as the remaining Super Power, but has absorbed a devastating blow to its national psyche on Sept 11, 2001 that has propelled it into an aggressive campaign against terrorism. The United States continues to make necessary adjustments across the military in order to coordinate all aspects of national power to defeat the threats of the Twenty-first Century. As a result, military units should embrace stability operations as a core mission designed to counter these elusive and cunning terrorist cells. The Marine Corps Mid-Range

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[18] Sarafino p.12

Threat Estimate sums it best: "The face of the primary threats to the Marine Corps is changing and the Marines must change with it."[19]

Words 1937

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[19]MCIA-1586-001-05, *Marine Corps Midrange Threat Estimate: 2005–2015* (Quantico VA: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, August 2005), p.8

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